

## The Brethren Evangelist

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### POINTS CORRESPONDENTS SHOULD REMEMBER.

1. This paper is the Organ of the Brethren Church.
2. The New Testament is the accepted and exclusive authority of Church Government.
3. Faith in Christ and Reformation from Sin, True Immersion, Supper and Communion, Washing Feet, and the Bible as the only rule of Faith and Practice are principles belonging to the name Brethren, and to be received by all churches as essential evidence of fellowship in the Brotherhood served by this paper.
4. The Local Congregation is recognized as a voluntary society, organized for ecclesiastical purposes that the membership may aid each other in divine things, as a part of the one body of Christ; and as such, as independent of other congregations and competent to adopt rules and regulations for its own internal management and discipline in harmony with the New Testament.
5. Reports of church trials and censures do not interest the churches, and will not be published, except in cases of flagrant crime against society and the faith, for the protection of the churches in general.
6. The editors do not hold themselves responsible for the views of correspondents, and consider themselves under no special obligation to publish the communications of any one; and do not suppose the earth will stop and the church fall to atoms if you are not heard, and no favoritism is known.
7. Write plainly upon one side of the sheet only, and do not mix matter demanding immediate publication, with essays and comments; make church news brief, keep out personal reflections, state at other denomination, and try to adapt yourself to the convenience of the publishers.

ASHLAND, Ohio, Aug. 7, 1889.

### New Testament Church Government.

In the first article under the above caption we endeavored to show that Christ had organized only a general church while on earth, and the local congregations were created by the apostles; that under Christ, there were no church officials, but all stood upon the same ground of relation to the church or ecclesia; and that in the apostolic congregations a closer union was formed for mutual advancement in religion, and officers were appointed for the management of the local congregations. Now the purpose of this article is to show the reasonableness of the system of New Testament church government.

In Luke the fifth chapter is found an account of a successful fishing business done by some of the apostles. The tenth verse reads: 'And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon.' Notice the word *partners*. We picked up Hudson's Critical Greek-English Concord—by the way a book which every preacher should have, with the Emphatic Diaglott, two of the best books for ministers—we found that *partners* is a translation of the same word that is translated *fellowship*, in the New Testament. The word is not found in the gospels, in speaking of fellowship of the members of the church, and there would not seem to be need of any from a purely gospel standpoint. Under the gospel the baptized are disciples and brethren—only children of the kingdom.

But in the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles, fellowship is frequently spoken of, and so the original Greek word is the same as the word which is in other places translated 'partner.'

This brings the matter of our relation in the local congrega-

tion down to a very practical basis. We are *partners in divine business*; and the local congregation is a purely partnership arrangement. Fellowship and communion mean exactly that in the language written by the apostles. There is no mystery or mysticism in this relation. It is a partnership in religious matters, and differs in no respect from secular partnership except in the methods and objects.

Men go into partnership in worldly affairs for mutual financial benefit. Men should go into partnership—in local congregations—for mutual divine and spiritual benefit. In the secular partnership each member is entitled to his rights in deciding all matters which concern the business of the company. This firm or company has liberty to decide upon such principles of business as will be most conducive to the interests of the company, and each member, if he is loyal to the partnership, will guide his deals in accordance with the rules adopted.

The New Testament Apostolic Church is a religious partnership. In a locality, within convenient reach of each other are twenty or thirty persons who belong to the body of Christ, and are his by adoption into the family of God. They decide to enter into a religious partnership for advancement in the divine life. This then becomes expedient to them for mutual aid and encouragement in serving the Lord and administering to the wants of the needy.

Jesus Christ never established more than one organization of believers, and to this one he is Lord of lords and King of kings. When he comes he will rule in person in this organization, and the duty of his servants now is to gather a people out of the Gentile nations for his name. When he comes there will be one vast universal empire, and but one ruler—Christ.

It is plainly evident that if there was only one organization at the present time to rule over all religious workers in the world, the progress of the truth would be greatly hindered. The Lord does not rule alone in the world and over the flesh, to the extent of bringing all under his dominion against the free-will of the governed. Therefore without him, the one head, if there was but a single church, would become corrupt, and then many workers would need to waste much time in receiving orders from the one religious authority.

Romanism has undertaken to establish such a central power in the world and make all the local organizations an essential part of the one body. But we see the disastrous results of such an undertaking. The fountain of power soon became corrupt, and every artery of the vast system was polluted with its rottenness. The Apostles did not undertake such a task. It was not the will of God that it should be undertaken. They preached the gospel and believers were made members of the mystical body of Christ—members in the mystical church of Christ. While sustaining this relation, it was their duty to obey the simple gospel of Christ and observe the ordinance set in order by the Lord. Then they were organized into local congregations, each independent of all others in doctrine, order

and discipline. To say that each was independent of all others in doctrine does not imply that they could have any other doctrine than the gospel of Christ, but it does imply that one had no doctrinal authority over another, and no right to interfere, farther than to plead with and admonish when there was a tendency to laxness.

Again, the New Testament system is reasonable, because the gospel was to be preached to all nations. Every one of observing experience knows that it is utterly impossible to bring men of all conditions, prejudices, nations, peculiarities, different loves and hates, under a single system of local church government. The intelligent plan then is to allow each organization to adopt the regulations suited to the place, the surroundings and the people who enter into the religious partnership.

Again, the New Testament system is reasonable because it did not undertake to make part of one organization, outside of the mystical church of Christ, men of different tongues, tastes and nations. The Apostles were endowed with tongues, that language would not interfere with their missionary work. They preached the gospel to the nations in their own tongues, and as institutions existing among men, the churches were absolutely independent of one another. Each one being complete in itself it was possessed with full liberty to reach out in missionary efforts as it was able, and possess the land for Christ. The system is reasonable because the greater animosity of the kings would have been aroused in seeing a vast and compact organization growing out of the Christian mission, and the persecution would have been fiercer than it was.

There was one doctrine, but many practices, in the Apostolic churches, and it remained so until centuries had passed. Then aspiring men were anxious to have all uniform. Constantine undertook to make it so, and exiled several leaders, and no good came from the effort. The Popes have been working on the same line for twelve hundred and sixty years, and have crimsoned the earth with the blood of the righteous, and the task is no more performed than when Paul wrote, 'I am made all things to all men; to the Jew I became a Jew and to the Greek, a Greek.'

The New Testament system of Church Government is reasonable because it affords the greatest security against the spread of false doctrines and dangerous practices. It does not matter how hellish a doctrine may be, or how corrupting a practice, there never was a council or large organization of religious interests that could not be prostituted to the acceptance of such doctrines and practices. There were errors in some of the churches in the days of the Apostles, but the independent character of the churches prevented any disastrous development of the same. It was not until the monarchical system was established that dangerous doctrines and practices were propagated. The Council has always been the favorite place for intolerant wolves in sheep's clothing who always want to do the think-

ing for other men. Actuated not by the spirit of Christ, but the spirit of the devil, they must have their own way or a fight; and any false doctrine thus planted will cause trouble or force submission to its provisions. A maintenance of the independent character of the local congregation, according to the New Testament system is the most effectual barrier against the evils of centralization and the machinations of hypocritical and devil-guided men, beasts and dogs.

With the independent system, if one church goes astray it is only an insignificant fraction that has been corrupted; and the self-repellant nature of the corrupt and the pure, has the effect of making sister congregations more devoted to the true, and more earnest advocates of the right, so that eventually, their increased devotion more than counterbalances all the evil effects of the one congregation which holds to false doctrines or evil practices.

The more we study the system of Church Government established by the Apostles, the more wisdom and good sense is seen in it. When men will once learn it, and be able to understand it, a new era will break in upon their minds, and they will receive an adequate conception of what the local congregation or church is—a simple religious partnership, for purely religious works; and understand that the measure of success is dependent upon the wisdom, tact, talent, labor and money they put into the partnership.

### Some Interesting History.

At the time of the public disputations on the subject of immersion in the seventeenth century in England, the Westminster Assembly, met by order of Parliament, and was in session from 1643 to 1649, and its deliberations were much troubled on the question of dipping or immersion. Yet according to Neal, there was not one baptist in the body. Dr. Lightfoot, one of its leading members, kept a journal of its proceedings and in his entry for August 7, 1844, tells us of 'a great heat' in the debate of the day, when they were framing the 'Directory' for baptism as to whether 'dipping' should be reserved or excluded, or whether 'it was lawful and sufficient to be sprinkled.' Coleman, called Rabbi Coleman, because of his great Hebrew learning, contended with Lightfoot that *tauvelah*, the Hebrew word for dipping, demanded immersion 'overhead'; and Marshall, a famous pulpit orator, stood firmly by him in the debate, both contending that dipping was essential in the 'first institution.' Lightfoot says that when they came to the vote, 'so many were unwilling to have dipping excluded that the vote came to an equality with one, for the one side was twenty-four and the other twenty-five; the twenty-four for the reserving of dipping and the twenty-five against it.' 'The business was recommitted,' and the next day, after another warm dispute, it was voted that pouring or sprinkling water on the face was sufficient and most expedient.

The above copied from Armitage's 'History of the Baptists' shows how the Presbyterian church received its sprinkling for

baptism. After hours of disputing only one vote was lacking to commit that body to immersion, and had the one vote more been on the side of dipping in the Assembly, the great Presbyterian church of today would be a dipping church, instead of a sprinkling. The astonishing thing about the work of that assembly was, that there was not a Baptist in it, yet it came within one of making a Baptist creed.

This is a strong point in the history of the Assembly for immersionists. The decision only says that sprinkling or pouring is sufficient and most expedient. The expediency we admit. It is easier performed than immersion, but we take no stock in declaring anything sufficient which is not authorized by the gospel of Christ, and sprinkling or pouring is not. 'The vote of one man committed a great church to a false practice.'

The principle of voting upon questions of right and wrong is from the devil. Right is always right, and no amount of voting can change it.

### Make Her Go.

A ship captain, a devoted patron of the god of leisure arrived from his voyage and made his report to his employers. He received orders to perform a small errand. He returned to his vessel and after cosily fixing himself in an easy place, indulging in the luxury of sweetmeats, he shouted to his men, 'Make her go, boys.' But after a long and wearisome voyage the 'boys' were not disposed to make her go under such circumstances, and they did not make her go until the captain went to work and began to prepare the sails for the trip.

There are many in the church of the same disposition. They are shouting to others, make her go boys, and sometimes the boys can't make her go and sometimes they seem not disposed to make her go.

There are in almost every labor in life those men who busy themselves in their devotion to the God of leisure, building castles in the air, without any practical feature connected therewith, and shout to others, here's the ship, make her go; and when it does not go, then an industry worthy of a better cause is used to find other men to put the blame upon.

Other men are moral cowards when a new work is to be done, and must feel around and learn what the probable encouragement will be, whether it is expedient, and whether the devil will be satisfied therewith—not so particular about God—and if all seems to be favorable then 'they are ready to let her go.'

When the matter of resuming specie payment was before this government, Horace Greeley, with his usual good sense, shouted out with his thundering pen, 'The way to resume is to resume.' This spirit should be the one imbibed by God's servants and decide that the way to make the gospel ship go, is to make it go, by putting your own shoulder to the wheel.

### A Master in Love.

Jesus was not only a master in wisdom and knowledge, as never before in the world, not only a master of his own manhood and character as no other man before